

Teacher and Farmer: Primary School Teachers as Farmers and Agricultural Role Models in 19th Century Denmark



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Introduction



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Chapter to the upcoming book: “Schoolteachers and the Nordic Model: Comparative and Historical Perspectives”, edited by J.E. Larsen et al. (Routledge 2021).

Overall aim with my chapter

Teachers’ socio-cultural history by focusing on their occupational and social roles.

The early professionalisation of teachers and the recruiting pattern outlined by these institutions

Specific aim with this paper

Danish rural teachers as farmers and agricultural role models in 19th century

Structured according to the conceptualisation of space posited by three Swedish historians, Larsson, Norlin and Rönnlund, inspired by Henri Lefebvre’s theories on the production of social space,

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”American agricultural and gardening machines” – sales ad in the Journal of the Danish Union of Teachers (1890)

The Planned Dimension



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Danish agricultural reforms in 1780's and 1790's aiming at giving the peasants a new role.

Therefore, a need for more schooling and a new type of teacher -> a "peoples' teacher"

Agricultural training at the teacher training colleges
1780s –1824

The Danish 1818 Teacher Training Act gave precedence to sons of farmers and teachers



*Moritz Unna, A schoolteacher reads a letter from their son abroad, 1835
(National Gallery of Denmark)*

The Physical Dimension



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”The necessary land plot as close to the school as possible to allow two cows and six sheep to graze”

In most places, six acres of medium quality

Differing physical conditions provided a disparate basis for teachers’ revenue and role as models



Next to the old school building from Kerteminde, now in Aarhus Open-air Museum, is a school garden with parsley, cabbage, lettuce, and carrots.

The Social Practice



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Work, work and more work: fencing the plot, draining the soil, cultivating the plot and garden etc.

Building bridges between the emerging science of agriculture and traditional farming methods.

Award-winning teachers as encouragers, initiators and role models: horticulture, beekeeping, new agricultural tools, etc.



Erik Werenskiöld, Dredging a Dith, 1886 (National Gallery of Denmark)

Teachers' farm marginalised



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From the 1840's, other types of professionals emerged within modern agricultural science.

The 1899 Danish School Act formalised an ongoing process of changing payment-in-kind elements of teachers' salaries to money and selling the school plot.

Only 25% of Danish teachers had a plot in 1910.



Aage Frederiksen, Ugerløse School and its 2 barns, 1925 (Tølløse Local Archives)

Conclusion



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Rural teachers put considerable effort and time into their work as ‘people’s teachers’ during the 19th century.

Contributing to our understanding of teachers’ sociocultural history by focusing on their multiple occupations and how they fulfilled their social roles in local communities.

School gardening was revived with the school garden movement from about 1900: The pedagogical school garden.



The school garden at Neder Donnerup School in Denmark, 1910s (Give Local Archives)